

# The Season's Children's Books

By **HILDERGARDE HAWTHORNE.**  
Introductory Article.

**F**LURRIES of books, like early snowflakes, books for children of every age and all possible tastes, flurries that quickly turn to a steady storm, show that Christmas is in the offing. To be sure, children read all the year through, but this is the season when every publisher makes their reading his first thought—one is tempted to think his only thought, looking upon the gathering piles of lovely volumes, each so desirable in its own special way. In their press work these books for the young are the most finished and beautiful of products. In their illustrations they reveal the skill and the imagination of the great men and women of that profession. In their text they draw on all the ages for treasure, they seek along fairy ways or breast the paths of adventure; they tell tales of wondrous fancy or of true deeds. Boys and girls, whether they

are so small that their book world is but a show of pictures or the murmur of mother's voice as she turns magic pages, or so grown up that the realities of life are tumbling in on them with every passing hour—all these boys and girls are provided for with a sumptuous generosity.

Several of the great classics of the world have gradually been pre-empted by the young. Books like Swift's "Gulliver's Travels," or Scott's "Ivanhoe," the Fables of Aesop, "Robinson Crusoe" and many more, written years ago for the adults of a social order that gave its children a horn book by which to learn to spell, and nothing more, these stories are now children's stories. And every coming season sees new and handsome editions appear, with superb pictures and adorable covers. Indeed, so fine are the covers of the beautiful editions for children, whether of old books or new ones, that one could easily fill an entire article with enthusiastic description of covers alone. Their shapes and sizes, the drawings that decorate them, the colors with which they glow, the playful fancy that sets its allure upon them, making you long to open them forthwith and plunge into the delights they promise, and at the same time holding you in lingering admiration of their sheer charm, covers like these deserve more than the word or two that is all there is space to give to them. For so many are the books, coming fresh from the presses in hundreds upon hundreds, that not even the most splendid can get more than a stick or two of comment.

These books can be divided into several classes, to help the distracted seeker after just the right thing for his or her particular Christmas child to find that special book or books without too much exertion. There are, for instance, the host of tiny books for little bits of boys and girls, books that tell quaint animal stories or which are filled with jolly jingles or that carry on from one volume to another gay adventures of baby heroes and heroines. These little books are brightly colored, and are usually quite as full of pictures as of text. They are meant to read aloud, to read over and over, as children love to have a book read, the while at each page the eager 'let me see' can be rewarded by the find of a new illustration. These little books are beautifully made and are true works of art, calculated to touch a child's imagination and rouse its sense of beauty. Many of them tell stories that contain facts about nature in the woods and fields, like the countless Burgess books, at the same time that they amuse and interest.

Then there is another great group, those books that run in series and which relate to school and college, stories of summer camps or of special athletic activities. One young hero or heroine will be followed as the years pass, beginning as a little thing of six or eight and going on to maturity. These books appear to be great favorites. They tell of people and of situations with which their child or adolescent readers are familiar, and they tell these things well. Usually there are several illustrations to each of these volumes, and the format is as good as with any adult novel. These books are to a large extent made to order and are not the children of inspiration, but they take the place of the moral tales of an older genre, holding up clean and vigorous ideals and picturing the world into which the schools and colleges lead in a way that, if circumscribed, is none the less faithful to fact. A number of them are excellently written, and are even enlivened with a sense of humor—the real thing, not a mere matter of funny situations.

Between these two groups comes one, perhaps larger than either, of the fairy and folk tales gathered from the wide world and from every age that told a fairy or a folk tale. It is in this group that the loveliest bindings and illustrations appear. Some of the volumes are large and splendid, reaching quarto size; others are slim little beauties, charming as flowers. Every child has a right to at least one or two of these exquisite books, and the more they have the better.

Besides these three main groups there are many others, appealing to special needs or fancies. There are the books of Western adventure and there are the sea and travel

yarns, the historic stories and what might be called the occupational stories, where a boy becomes a reporter, or an engineer, or a forest ranger or a farmer, or a girl takes up some chosen career. These stories, like the school stories, are written by men and women who know their subject thoroughly and who can write entertainingly.

Then there are always just a few books that stand alone. Such are the Van Loon books, where history becomes a glorious, amusing and understandable adventure. Such are the Dr. Doolittle books. Such is a book like "Two Little Mysogynists," by Carl Spitteler, winner of the Nobel prize for literature in 1920, and the foremost writer of modern Switzerland, a delectable tale of two youngsters of nine and ten, confirmed woman haters, and their adventure in setting off for school across part of Switzerland (Henry Holt & Co.). The pictures for the volume are by A. Helene Carter, who made a special trip to the mountain republic to get them. They are beautifully delicate and characteristic drawings in line, each a masterpiece. It is details like this that reveal something of the infinite pains given to making juvenile literature a worth while thing.

This is merely an introductory article, whose purpose is to indicate that this year's offering of Christmas books for young people is fully up to schedule. It

appears to be more than that—to be particularly rich and fortunate in what it has produced. Every important publisher has his lists of holiday titles, lists that shine with famous and favorite names that bring forth new writers and artists. In the succeeding articles we shall give some notion of what all these offerings are. The Century, Doran, Harpers, Little-Brown, the Atlantic Monthly Press, McClurg, Appleton, Dodd-Mead, Page, Macmillan, Stokes, Doubleday, Holt—these and others have turned their attention to making this Christmas in the bookland for children a remarkable one. There has been a great deal of newly awakened interest in children's reading, due to the efforts of libraries and schools and publishers, and this interest seems to have brought a rich harvest to the shelves. Very little that is cheap and bad is to be found. None the less, any one who sets forth to buy a book for a child, older or younger, ought to do it with open eyes and an understanding heart. Not any book, but the book, should be the aim. Know something of the tastes of the young person to whom you mean to present your book. If it be a boy or a girl who will love one of W. H. Hudson's nature studies do not be satisfied with a football or heroic tale. Children are as dissimilar in their likes and their tastes as adults, perhaps more so. The publishers have taken the trouble to get something for each individual preference. Be as careful in buying as they in producing and Christmas will be good.

## British Air Warfare

OFFICIAL HISTORY OF THE WAR. THE WAR IN THE AIR. Vol. I. By Walter Raleigh. Oxford University Press.

**A**PPARENTLY the British Official History of the War is being published without any definite system, for before the volumes devoted to the war afloat are completed we have the first volume of Walter Raleigh's "The War in the Air," which is an account of the work of the Royal Air Force. The scope of the whole narrative that is to be told regarding this arm of the fighting forces may be gathered from the fact that the opening volume runs to 489 pages and yet only covers the ground up to the winter of 1914. Being a civilian Mr. Raleigh has avoided, as much as possible, what he calls "the Masonic dialect of the services," which will be to the profit of the general reader in this country, to most of whom much of British service argot is unintelligible. Moreover, this historian has not cluttered up his pages with military abbreviations of rank, adopting the simple plan of giving to his officers, except on special occasions, the rank they held when the book was written. These features give to the text a simplicity and a clarity that is often miss-

ing in works prepared by officers whose vocabulary is necessarily filled with service terms not always plain to the American civilian.

This narrative describes the condition of the British air forces at the opening of the war; summarizes the history of the conquest of the air from the earliest times and the types of machines in existence in August, 1914; tells of the beginnings of the air forces and the institution of the Royal Flying Corps; and then takes up the work of the army flying men in the days of the retreat from Mons to Ypres when its usefulness in furnishing intelligence in actual warfare was first demonstrated. A special chapter is given to the navy's flying men, the record closing with an account of the means taken to expand the air force in the winter of 1914.

Unlike other British historians of the war, Mr. Raleigh does not stress the wholly inadequate air force at the outbreak of hostilities, the squabbles between the army and navy and the Air Ministry, nor the slowness of production of aircraft, apparently believing these things have had sufficient publicity. His philosophy of writing history is to be cheerful about it and to let his tale wear the brightest possible face.

## The Spirit of the Revolution

THE FOUNDING OF THE AMERICAN REPUBLIC. Vol. I. The Causes of the War of Independence. Houghton Mifflin Company.

**I**N his new history of the Founding of the American Republic, Prof. Van Tyne purposes "to relate those outstanding facts and movements in American history which best describe the founding of the American Republic" as looked at in the light of the newer scholarship of recent years, which has brought about "a decided modification in the old views of the causes which led to the American Revolution." In the opening volume (the story is to be told in three parts) there is explained the growth of the spirit of independence which made Americans discontented with their subordinate position in the British Empire, this being done in thirteen chapters beginning with the conditions which formed the "American spirit" and ending with the formation of the Continental Congress and the battle of Lexington.

Prof. Van Tyne shows how the British system of colonial government gradually grew to be resented in the American colonies, how the several local assemblies changed the laws to suit their new needs

in the wilderness, and how the stamp act revealed the weakness in the imperial system of government. Side by side with political conditions in the American colonies he shows what forces were operating against them in Great Britain, sketches the social and intellectual gulf that separated England and the colonies, and lays more stress than any other writer we know on the part religion played in bringing on the War of Independence.

The value and importance of this work of scholarship lies in the fact that less stress than usual is laid on the superficial political, military and economic causes of the Revolution and more on those profounder elements that have been heretofore only lightly considered by our older historical writers. The novelty of this treatment, including the stress laid on the religious feeling of the time when preachers thundered politics from their pulpits, will cause the general reader of our American history to look forward eagerly to Prof. Van Tyne's treatment of the war itself and of "the failure of the first American experiment in organizing an effective union and the story of the successful attempt which wrought the Constitution of the United States."

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